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WILDERNESS SUITABILITY REPORT

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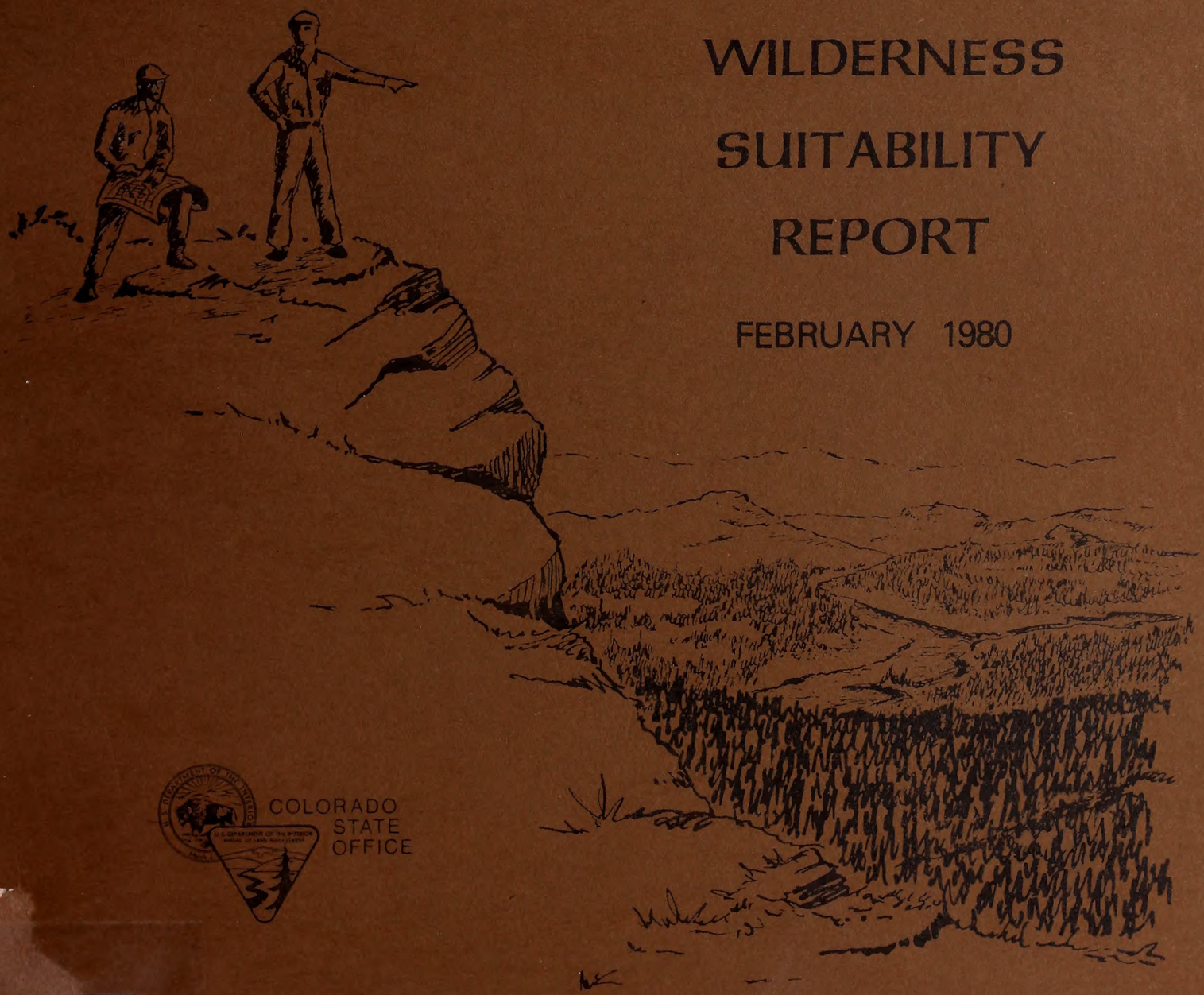

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WILDERNESS SUITABILITY REPORT

POWDERHORN

Montrose District, Colorado
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior

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WILDERNESS SUITABILITY RECOMMENDATION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recommends that the Congress of the United States incorporate the Powderhorn Primitive Area and all contiguous public lands having wilderness characteristics and deemed manageable as wilderness, as described in this document and totaling 44,951 acres, into the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Powderhorn contains a unique natural alpine environment of outstanding natural beauty which provides an exceptional opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

The area meets the criteria of Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, and multiple use resource analysis revealed no significant resource conflicts resulting from a wilderness designation.

Recommendation:

Area Manager, Gunnison Basin Resource Area, CO — 2/22/80 Date

District Manager, Montrose, Colorado — 2/22/80 Date

State Director, Colorado — 3/10/80 Date

Director, Bureau of Land Management — Date

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Proposed Powderhorn Wilderness Area
(Map 4)

New Mexico Principal Meridian, Colorado

Beginning at the northeast corner of Section 20, T. 46N., R. 2W.

Thence, southerly up the east bank of the East Fork of Powderhorn Creek approximately 4½ miles to its intersection with the north boundary of Section 9, T. 45N., R. 2W.; thence east approximately 1¼ miles to the southwest corner of Section 2, T. 45N., R. 2W.; thence south ½ mile, east ½ mile, south ½ mile, east ¼ mile, south ½ mile, east ¼ mile, south 1 mile, west 3/4 mile, south ¼ mile, east ½ mile, south ¼ mile, east 3/4 mile, south ¼ mile, east ¼ mile, south 3/4 mile, and west 3/4 mile to the northwest corner of Section 36, T. 45N., R. 2W.; thence south one mile and east approximately one mile to the northeast corner of section 1, T. 44 N., R. 2 W.; thence southerly approximately one-eighth mile along the east boundary of section 1 to the intersection with the west bank of Cebolla Creek; thence southerly along the west bank of Cebolla Creek to the intersection with the south boundary of the northeast quarter of the northeast quarter of section 1, T. 44 N., R. 2 W.; thence west approximately ¼ mile to the southwest corner of the northeast quarter of the northeast quarter of section 1; thence southerly approximately 1¼ miles along the east boundary of the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter and west half of the southeast quarter of section 1 and the west half of the northeast quarter of section 12 to the north edge of the Hinsdale County road; thence southwesterly along the north edge of said road approximately one-sixteenth mile to the north bank of Cebolla Creek; thence westerly approximately ½ mile along the north bank of Cebolla Creek to the south boundary of the south half of the northwest quarter of section 12; thence westerly approximately ¼ mile to the west quarter corner of section 12, T. 44 N., R. 2 W.; thence west ¼ mile, south ¼ mile, west ½ mile, south ½ mile, west ¼ mile, south ¼ mile, west ¼ mile, south ¼ mile, west ¼ mile, and south ¼ mile to the boundary of the Gunnison National Forest; thence 1½ miles west along said boundary, north 3 miles along said boundary, west 8 miles along said boundary to the southeast corner of Section 36, T. 45N., R. 4W.; thence north 4-3/4 miles, east 1¼ miles, north ¼ mile, east 2-3/4 miles to the northeast corner of Section 10, T. 45N., R. 3W.; thence south 795 feet to the northwest corner of Section 11, T. 45N., R. 3W.; thence east approximately 2¼ miles to the West Fork of Powderhorn Creek; thence northerly along the west bank of the West Fork of Powderhorn Creek to its intersection with the east boundary line of Section 19, T. 46N., R. 2W.; thence north approximately 1-1/8 miles to the west quarter corner of Section 17, T. 46N., R. 2W.; thence east 1 mile and south ½ mile to the point of beginning.

The area described aggregates approximately 44,951.27 acres.

INTRODUCTION

Section 603(a) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) provides in part:

> That the Secretary of the Interior shall report to the President by July 1, 1980, his recommendations on those areas which the Secretary has prior to November 1, 1975, formally identified as natural or primitive areas.

There are 11 primitive areas and 44 natural areas on Bureau lands for which this accelerated wilderness review is required. These areas are referred to as wilderness "instant study areas" (ISAs).

The Montrose District of the Bureau of Land Management has inventoried the Powderhorn Primitive Area and contiguous roadless lands to determine if the area possesses wilderness characteristics, and if so, to make a recommendation as to the suitability or non-suitability of this area as wilderness to Congress. This report presents the Bureau's findings and recommendations.

In this report, those lands recommended suitable for designation as wilderness will be referred to as the "Powderhorn".

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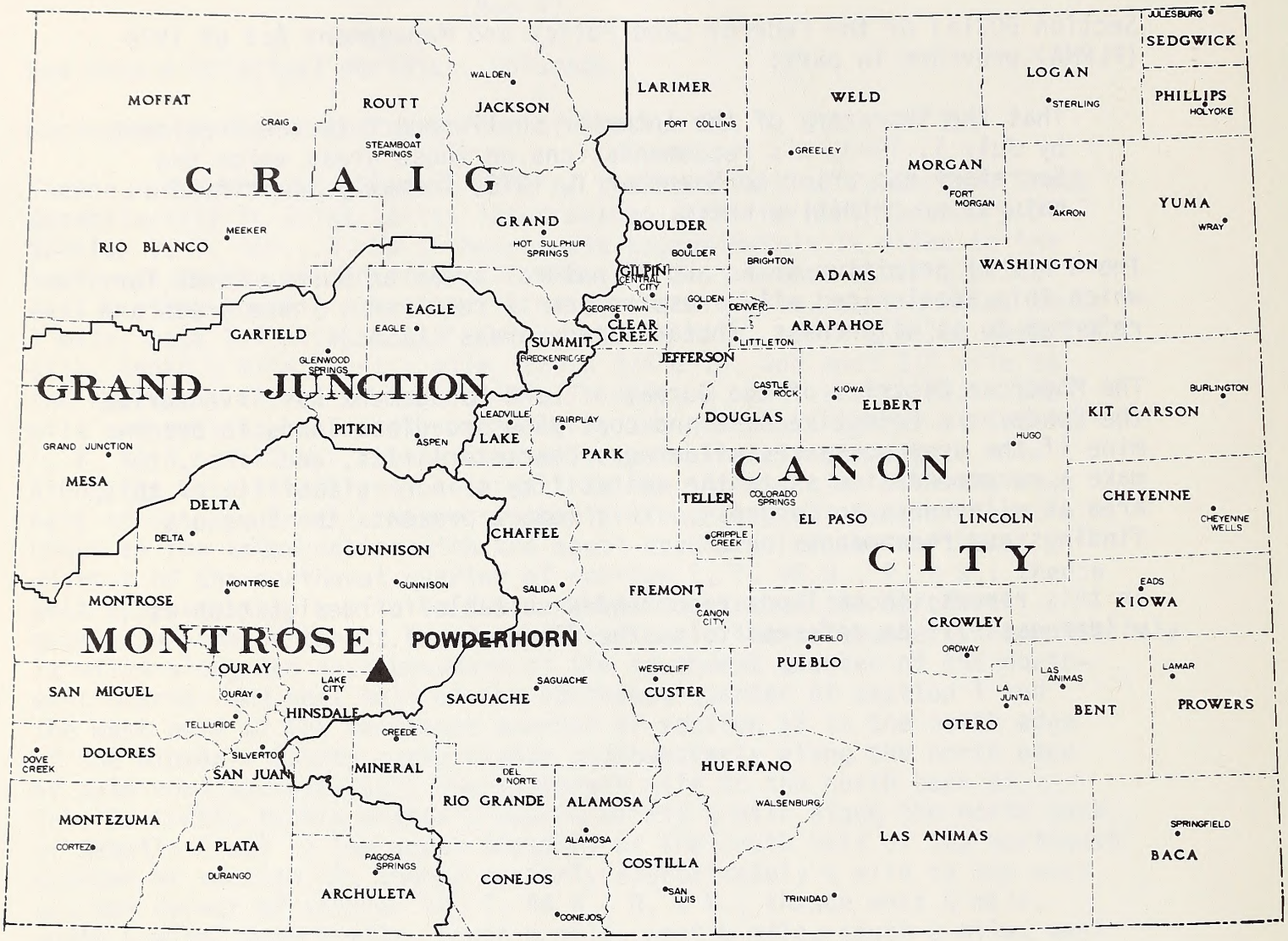
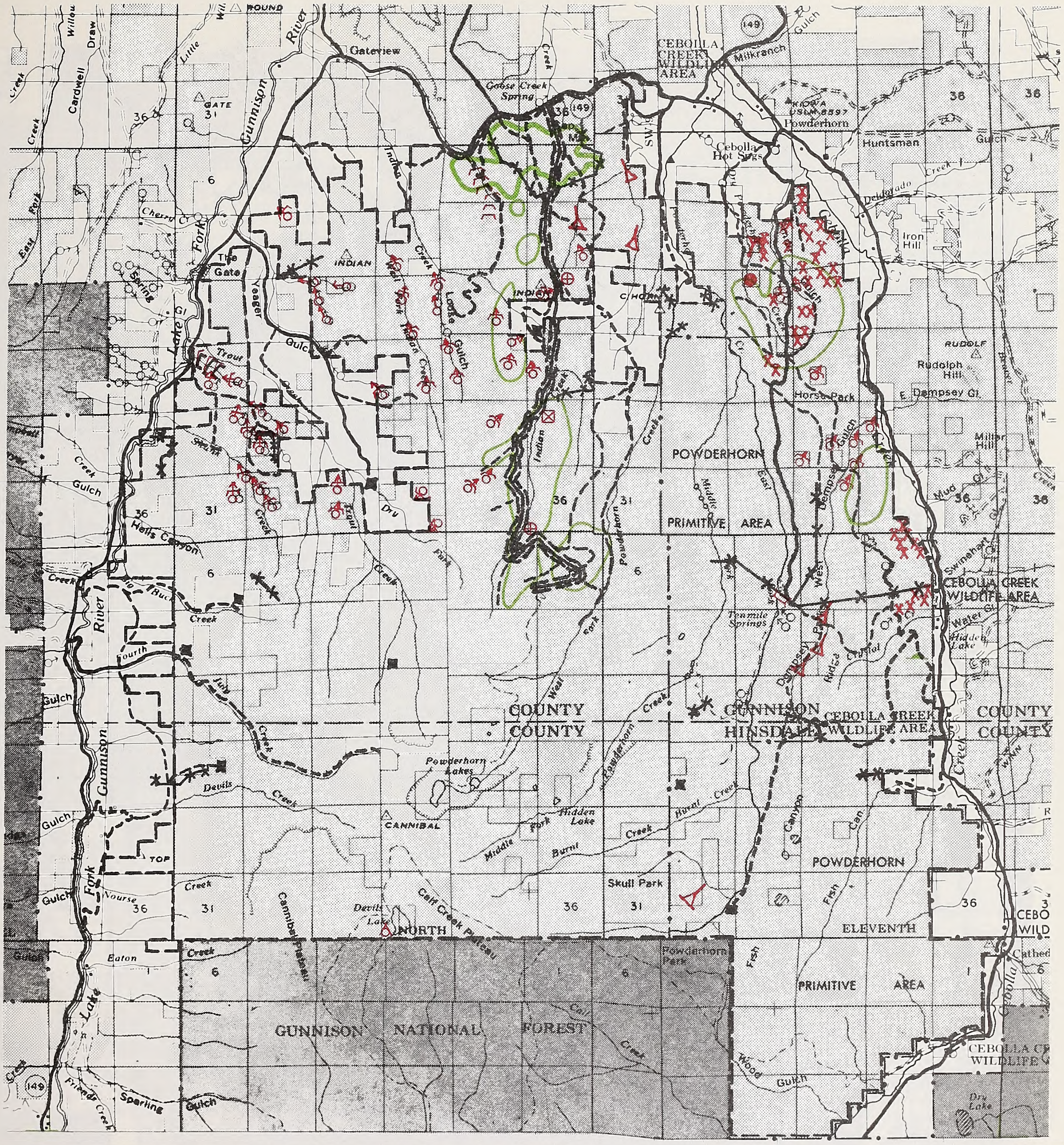


January 1980

LOCATION OF POWDERHORN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

MAP 1



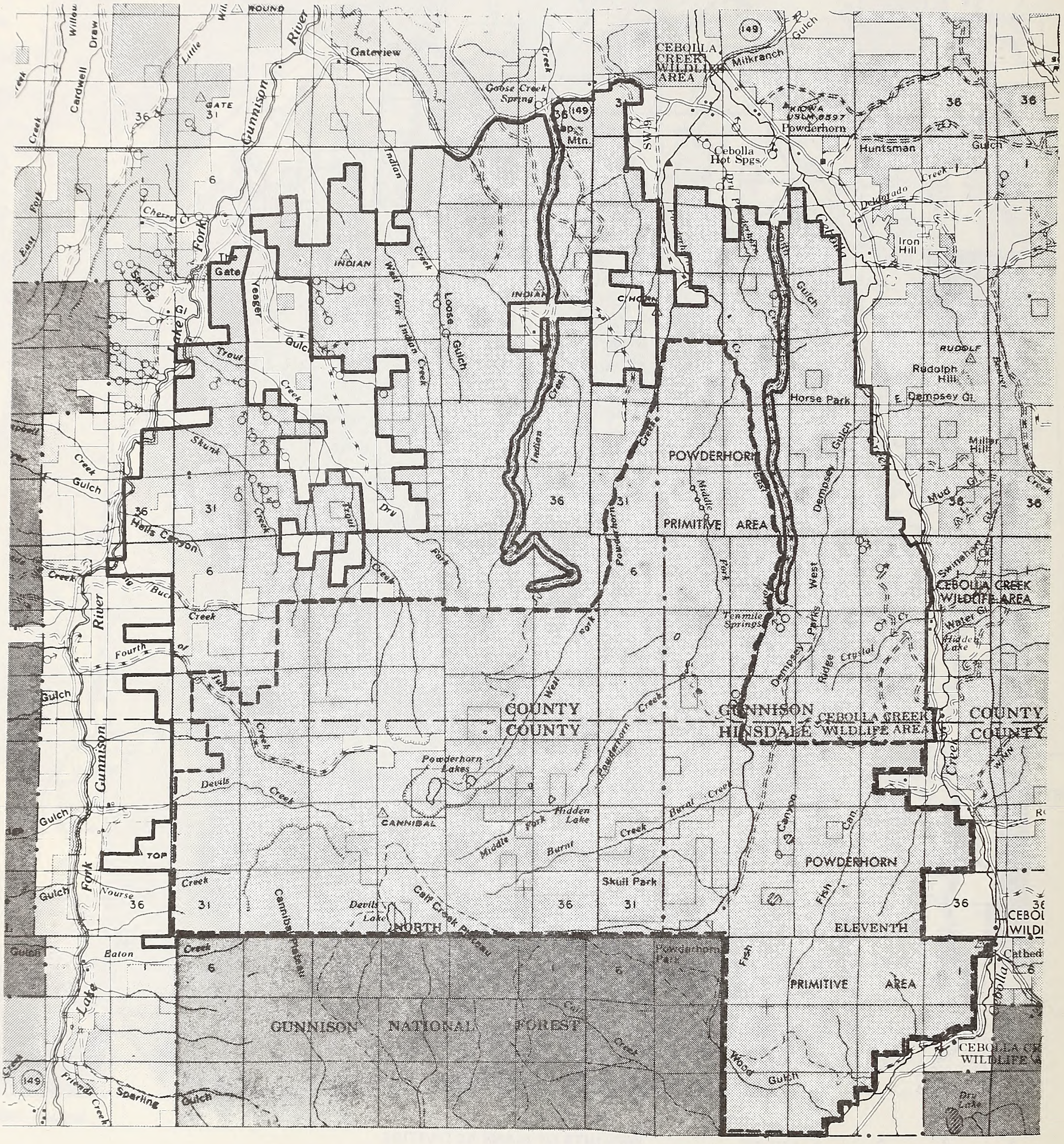
January 1980

0 1 2 3 4 MILES

IMPRINTS OF MANS ACTIVITIES

MAP 2

- ROADLESS AREA BOUNDRY
- ROADS
- WAYS
- TIMBER CUTS
- LOGGING MILL SETS
- CONTOUR FURROWING
- MINERAL EXPLORATION
- FENCES
- DEVELOPED SPRINGS
- CHECK DAMS
- RESERVOIRS
- CATTLEGUARD
- WINDMILL
- HELISPOT
- BORROW PIT
- YCC CAMP
- CABINS



January 1980

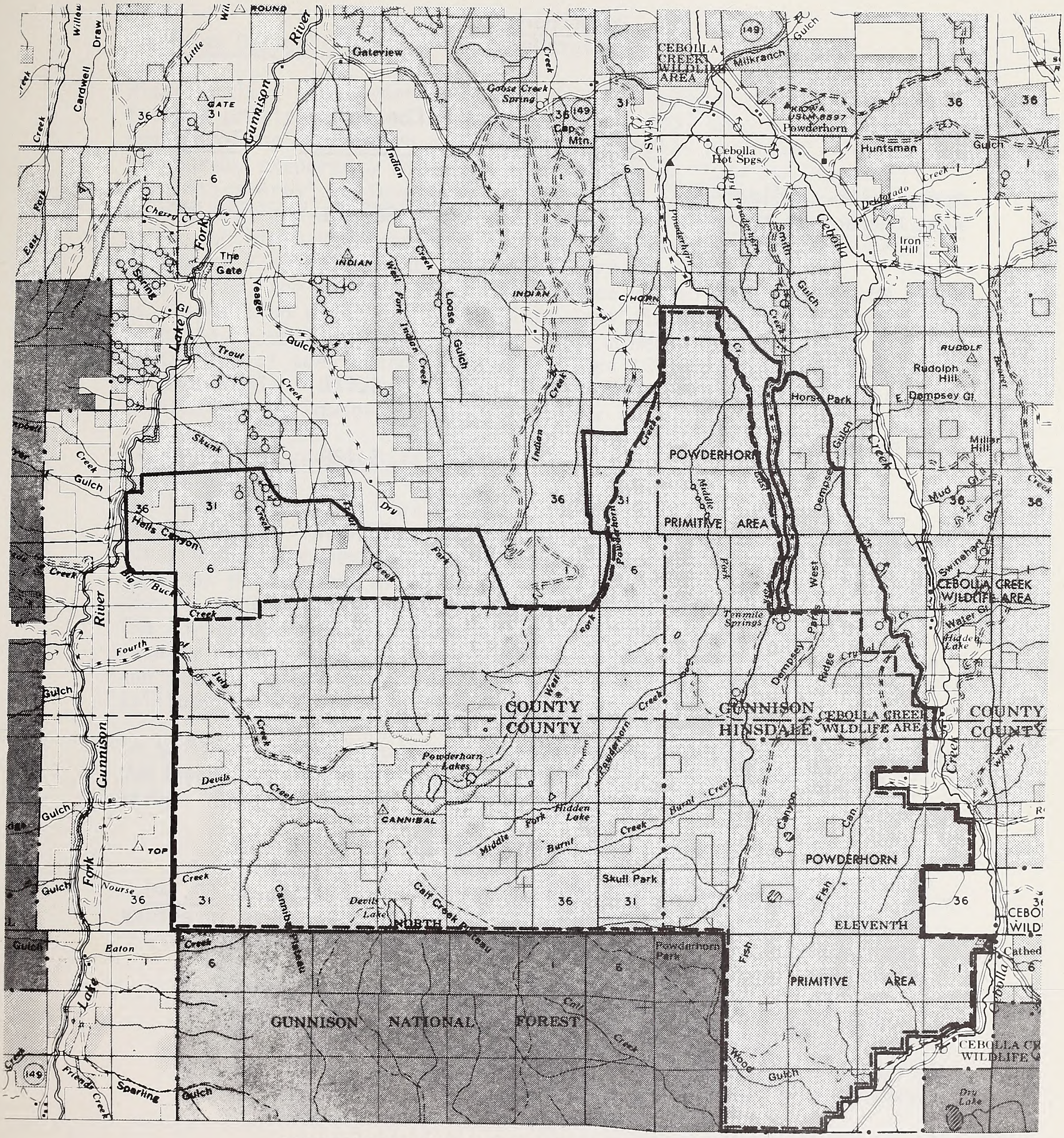
INSTANT STUDY AREA BOUNDARY AND CONTIGUOUS ROADLESS AREA

MAP 3

N

- BLM LAND
- NATIONAL FOREST LAND
- PRIVATE LAND
- INVENTORY & ROADLESS AREA UNIT
- INSTANT STUDY AREA

0 1 2 3 4 MILES



POWDERHORN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

MAP 4

January 1980

- BLM LAND
- NATIONAL FOREST LAND
- PRIVATE LAND
- STUDY AREA
- AREA RECOMMENDED AS SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS

N

0 1 2 3 4 MILES

STATISTICAL SUMMARY

Powderhorn
Colorado

	Previously Designated Area	Contiguous Lands	Total
Acres Without Wilderness Characteristics	0	26,940	26,940
Acres With Wilderness Characteristics*			
Recommended For Designation	40,480	4,471	44,951 1/
Recommended Against Designation	0	5,189	5,189
Total	40,480	36,600	77,080

1/ This figure does not include private lands.

Ownership in Recommended Area (February, 1980)

BLM: 44,951 acres

Private: 320 acres

* The total acreage containing wilderness characteristics is 50,140, which is the unit referred to in the intensive wilderness inventory (see Appendix A and section entitled "Summary of Wilderness Characteristics").

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Previous Designation

Historically, the Powderhorn area has been recognized by the Bureau for its primitive and wild values. In the 1969 Cebolla Unit Resource Analysis, the Powderhorn area was recognized as roadless. In 1970, the Bureau prepared a document entitled Action Plan for Potential "Primitive Area" Designation for Powderhorn Lakes Roadless Area. This report outlined and evaluated a proposal recommending primitive area status be given Powderhorn. The 1972 Cebolla-Powderhorn Management Framework Plan recommended the Powderhorn as a primitive area. In April 1973, the Powderhorn Primitive Area was withdrawn from all forms of disposition under the public land laws, including the mining laws, with the exception of leasing under the mineral leasing laws, for the protection of scenic and primitive values (38 FR 22625; withdrawal file C-17286). In August 1973 the Secretary of the Interior formally designated the Powderhorn Primitive Area (38 FR 23427).

Significant Resource Data

The high, relatively flat alpine tundra topography increases the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation for it allows for freedom of movement without physical barriers. In nearly every adjacent wilderness, or de facto wilderness, the primitive opportunities for the majority of users is limited to trail hiking or riding. The Powderhorn Instant Study Area facilitates and promotes cross-country travel which is a more unrestrictive recreational experience, and allows for dispersion of the user, enhancing opportunities for solitude.

In addition to the wilderness characteristics detailed in Appendix A, the Powderhorn includes some outstanding and unique supplemental values which add to the wilderness resource:

1. Ecologically, the Powderhorn area encompasses one of the largest and least disturbed, relatively flat alpine tundra areas in the contiguous United States. This ecosystem includes the northern parts of Cannibal and Calf Creek Plateaus.

2. Geologically, the area consists of Tertiary volcanic deposits, both lava flow and ash flow tuff, in some areas believed to be five thousand feet in thickness. Alpine glaciation changed the feature of the landscape by creating cirque basins, glacial tarns, morainal deposits and lakes, U-shaped valleys and rock glaciers.

3. Scientific and educational values exist with opportunities to study and analyze alpine and subalpine ecosystems, and glacial and igneous geology and geomorphology. The Powderhorn area includes a large elk breeding ground and peripheral usage by Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. In the alpine tundra are found ptarmigan as well as a large variety of alpine plant types such as moss campion (Silene acaulis), alpine forget-me-not (Eritrichium elongatum), and Jacobs ladder (Polemonium pulcherrimum).

4. Scenic values are very high due to a combination of diverse vegetative types and topographic landforms which are relatively unique within the region. Man-made features are noticeably lacking or are harmonious with the natural landscape. The Powderhorn offers outstanding views of the San Juan Mountains. These adjacent lands, managed largely by the U.S. Forest Service, include several wilderness or proposed wilderness areas.

5. Historically, the Powderhorn area was utilized by the Ute Indians as a summer hunting ground, as were the majority of the San Juan Mountains. The Powderhorn is believed to be the general area of the infamous Alferd E. Packer's cannibalistic "feast" of five men in the winter of 1874. Some old cabins or remnants are found within the Powderhorn and, although they enhance the appeal of the wilderness resource, their historical value is undetermined at this time.

Description of the Report Area

The area surrounding the Powderhorn Primitive Area is rural and sparsely populated by ranch and farm families living along Cebolla Creek and the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River. In addition, to the north of the primitive area is the small community of Powderhorn and to the southwest is the town of Lake City. Much of Lake City's revenues are a result of tourism. The southern portion of the Powderhorn borders a Gunnison National Forest RARE II Area, Cannibal Plateau (31,990 acres), proposed by the Forest Service for further study. To the west of the Powderhorn is the proposed Uncompahgre Wilderness and to the east is the existing La Garita Wilderness.

The study area may be reached by three main routes. Access to the northern portion of the area is provided via the BLM's Indian Creek Road. The northeastern portion is served by the Ten Mile Springs Road. The eastern portion of the area is provided access by a county road along Cebolla Creek and by BLM's system of trails in the area.

SUMMARY OF WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

The Powderhorn Primitive Area, known as the Powderhorn Instant Study Area (ISA) (40,480 acres), and contiguous roadless lands (36,600 acres), totaling approximately 77,080 acres of public lands, were inventoried for wilderness characteristics in 1978. This inventory, conducted during the Unit Resource Analysis for the Gunnison Basin, followed procedures outlined in the Bureau's Draft Wilderness Inventory Handbook. The Director of the Bureau of Land Management authorized initiation of the wilderness inventory for this and other public lands within the area covered by the Gunnison Basin Grazing Environmental Statement prior to the publishing of the final Wilderness Inventory Handbook.

Of the approximately 77,080 acres inventoried, 50,140 acres* were determined to contain wilderness characteristics. These 50,140 acres were found to be primarily natural in character and contained outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. Approximately 26,940 acres, consisting of 11 areas, were found to be roadless but lacking wilderness characteristics. Some lands, due to extensive logging of Englemann spruce, Douglas fir and ponderosa pine, or mineral prospecting associated with thorium, titanium and manganese, no longer retain their natural or primeval character. Other areas were excluded for lack of outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. These areas were either physically separated from the ISA boundary or of such narrow conformity and configuration that outstanding opportunities were nonexistent (see Maps 2 and 3).

The wilderness inventory for the Powderhorn is included in Appendix A.

*As the statistical summary on page 8 of this report illustrates, of these 50,140 acres with wilderness characteristics, only 44,951 acres were found to be manageable as wilderness. These manageability considerations were made during the "study" of the Powderhorn area, and are discussed in the "Summary of Wilderness Study" section of this report (pages 12-17).

Manageability Considerations

There are basically nine alternatives which were evaluated during the study phase for suitable and non-suitable recommendations as wilderness for the Powderhorn. Following, these nine areas are described either as suitable or non-suitable for wilderness (see map in Appendix B).

SUITABLE AS WILDERNESS:

Powderhorn ISA (existing Primitive Area)

As evidenced by management consistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964 for the past seven years, the present primitive area boundary encompasses a manageable unit and has a reasonably manageable boundary. Additionally, recognizing the wilderness inventory data, Unit Resource Analysis, Planning Area Analysis, Socio-Economic Profile, Step I Management Framework Plan recommendations, and public comments and suggestions, the Powderhorn ISA is considered well-suited for wilderness designation. A 280-acre private inholding having a single ownership is located within the ISA boundary. At the present time, land users on this private parcel are compatible with the primitive area management (see page 37 of this report for a discussion of the Bureau of Land Management's acquisitions/negotiations with the landowner).

Dempsey park Area (Area 2, App. B)

The addition of this area would enhance the manageability of the Powderhorn and would provide a manageable boundary. The boundary resulting from addition of this area would cross two existing "ways" that have been some problem in the past. Use of these ways is increasing and will have to be eliminated to prevent degradation of multiple resource values; forage; soil mantle in open parks, meadows, and on steep, unstable slopes; and wildlife habitat in Bear Gulch and Dempsey Park. The resulting boundary would intersect these ways at steep terrain and would generally coincide well with topographic features. 1/

Powderhorn Creek Confluence Area (Area 5, App. B)

While this area can be effectively managed as wilderness, the addition of the area is not critical to the overall manageability of the Powderhorn. The area appears to have been originally left out of the primitive area designation for use as a buffer zone. Manageable lands meeting the legal criteria should not be used as buffer zones since adequate constraints to incompatible use cannot be enforced with any degree of certainty.

1/ The definitions of "roads" and "ways" are found on page 5 of the BLM Wilderness Inventory Handbook. A "way" is defined as a two-wheel track maintained solely by the passage of vehicles.

Fourth of July Creek Area (Area 8, App. B)

Inclusion of this area would result in a manageable addition to the proposed wilderness area with a manageable boundary. This area contains a amount of productive timber and associated impacts are considered minimal. Access costs would likely preclude cost-effective timber harvests.

One 40-acre tract of private land is included on the periphery of the area. Use of this tract presently consists of limited livestock grazing due to the tract's extremely steep slopes and inaccessibility. Land acquisition is considered necessary to insure that development, access and use constraints are consistent with adjacent public lands proposed for wilderness designation. Considering the character, past, present and potential use of this tract, acquisition should have minimal impact to the existing ranch operation (Ute Trail Ranch) and private landowner. The Bureau will continue to negotiate with the landowner in an attempt to acquire the property.

NON-SUITABLE AS WILDERNESS:

West Dempsey Gulch Area (Area 3, App. B)

Inclusion of this area would require closure and rehabilitation of several miles of the Ten Mile Springs Road to become a manageable part of the Powderhorn. It would require relocation of existing trailhead facilities. The necessary rehabilitation would be very difficult and costly with no appreciable benefit to the manageability of the Powderhorn. Passive rehabilitation is not feasible.

Ten Mile Springs Road Area (Area 4, App. B)

Inclusion of this area would result in an unmanageable boundary along the west side of the Ten Mile Springs Road. This suggested boundary adjustment would be continually violated each time someone pulled off the road to park a horse trailer, etc., which is fairly common. In addition, it is only a few hundred yards (varying) from the east rim of the East Fork of Powderhorn Creek, an effective and manageable existing boundary. Addition of this narrow strip of land would not significantly enhance the wilderness value of the Powderhorn.

Indian Creek Ridge Area (Area 6, App. B)

Inclusion of this area would result in an unmanageable boundary that does not make reasonable use of topographic features in the area. It could restrict otherwise available management options for minimizing impacts of recreation over-use at Powderhorn Lakes through possible relocation of the Indian Creek Trailhead. Inclusion would not contribute in any appreciable way to the Powderhorn or the wilderness experience offered by the area. There is an existing "way" within this area which is a minor visual intrusion.

Skunk Creek-Hells Canyon Area (Area 7, App. B)

Inclusion of this area would necessitate acquisition of approximately 1,000 acres of private lands. The area is not needed to have an effective wilderness management unit in the Powderhorn. Private land acquisitions must be limited to well-demonstrated needs of the United States in accordance with the intent of the Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970. There is no evidence of willing sellers of most of these private lands. One landowner in the area has indicated a willingness to consider exchange of 40 acres of private land.

Inclusion of this area would result in an unmanageable and somewhat irregular boundary. It would, however, result in the addition of some lands in the sagebrush vegetation type which is otherwise limited to small areas in the recommended wilderness area. This would contribute some to the diversity of eco-types represented, but not significantly.

Inclusion of this area would preclude some proposed vegetation treatment designed to restore the potential plant community that should be present on the range sites affected.

This area contains some lands on the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River that have potential for development of public recreation facilities to accommodate intensive recreation use. Public lands on the Lake Fork with this potential are extremely scarce in relation to identified public demand.

Irregular Tract Area (Area 9, App. B)

These lands cannot be effectively managed as wilderness because of their irregular configuration, narrow width, intermingled private-public land status, and relative isolation from the Powderhorn.

Economic and Social Impacts

The proposed wilderness designation would not significantly impact economic or social conditions or values.

Social:

Use of the Powderhorn presently is primarily primitive recreation: hunting, fishing, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, photography and nature study. The area is also utilized for cattle and sheep grazing, and scientific and educational study, all of which would continue under wilderness designation.

Economic:

The majority of the public land proposed for wilderness designation is presently managed by the Bureau as a primitive area. Under primitive area status, the cutting of live or dead standing trees is prohibited with the exception of use for fence construction, fire suppression, or for visitor health and safety along trails. Thus, wilderness designation would be no change from the present primitive area status as both designations prohibit commercial timber harvesting.

The only economic impact regarding the commercial forest resources would be those areas in those lands contiguous (4,471 acres) with the Powderhorn ISA proposed for wilderness designation.

Of these 4,471 acres, 2,220 acres have been classified as forested. This includes stands of Douglas fir and Englemann spruce. Approximately 1,120 acres of the 2,220 acres could be intensively managed. The managed acres could yield 47,000 board feet per year or 470,000 board feet per decade. This would result in a yearly economic loss of approximately $16,000 (lumber selling value) or $1,800 (stumpage value - $40 per MBF).

Visitor usage may increase slightly over past use with the designation of the Powderhorn as a wilderness area. However, a more direct cause of increased visitor usage could occur as a result of publicity through trail guides, magazine articles, or through controversy during the designation process. The visitor use increases are anticipated to parallel the national growth rate of wildland use in general.

In 1972, during the Cebolla-Powderhorn MFP process, over 85 percent of the public comments favored establishment of the Powderhorn Primitive Area. During the U.S. Forest Service RARE II process, the State of Colorado received strong pro-wilderness support, although local anti-wilderness sentiment was recorded. While public comment is an important consideration regarding the supply and demand of wilderness, other resource supply and demands must be assessed to compare relative values. In the Powderhorn, there are no other resource demands which are higher nor regional supplies which are lower. Since other resource "needs" are at the same level or lower, regarding the opportunities to be found within the Powderhorn, the concept of supply and demand does not play a deciding factor in a suitability recommendation. Important considerations are the primitive recreational opportunities and qualities the Powderhorn contains, which other nearby wilderness or proposed wilderness areas may not contain.

Long-Term and Short-Term Effects of the Recommendation

Wilderness designation of the Powderhorn Primitive Area and adjacent recommended lands would continue to preserve and protect those lands containing wilderness characteristics in both the long and short term.

Designation would have an adverse impact on the timber resource by preventing commercial timber harvest of an additional 2,220 acres of land identified in the previous section (Economic and Social Impacts). Uses incompatible with the purposes of designation as wilderness are commercial timber harvesting and motorized recreation. These uses are presently prohibited within the Powderhorn Primitive Area.

Options Foregone

The U.S. Bureau of Mines and U.S. Geological Survey have conducted mineral surveys in the Powderhorn. Some small traces of thorium, titanium and manganese were found, but all sites are outside the area proposed for wilderness designation. No mineral resources of economic value were found within the boundaries of the Powderhorn (Appendix C).

As previously stated, 47,000 board feet per year would be removed from timber harvest in 1,120 of the 4,471 acres contiguous to the Powderhorn Instant Study Area.

Under present management of the primitive area, motorized vehicle use is prohibited. This restriction would continue should the area be designated as wilderness by Congress.

Regional Analysis

The Powderhorn lies within the northern extremity of the San Juan Mountains in the region known as Southwest Colorado (see Map 1). The region's economy is based primarily upon ranching, farming, mining and recreation.

The largest population centers in Southwest Colorado are:

Town	1970 Population
Durango	10,333
Montrose	6,496
Cortez	6,032
Gunnison	4,613
Delta	3,694

The population of the Southwest Colorado region in 1970 is estimated at 87,000 residents. The majority of residents are within a one-to-two hour driving time to a designated wilderness area. Major population centers (over 100,000 residents) are located on the East Slope (Fort Collins, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo). Wilderness areas in Southwestern Colorado are approximately one-half to a full day's drive from these population centers. Commercial airlines provide service to the communities of Montrose, Gunnison, Durango and Cortez.

Five designated wilderness areas are found within this region:

Wilderness Area	Acreage	Managing Agency
Black Canyon of the Gunnison	11,180	National Park Service
La Garita	48,486	U.S. Forest Service
Mesa Verde	8,100	National Park Service
Weminuche	401,400	U.S. Forest Service
West Elk	61,412	U.S. Forest Service

In addition, the following areas wtihin this region have been proposed to Congress for designation as wilderness:

Administratively Proposed Wilderness*	#	Acreage	Managing Agency
Kannah Creek	195	29,650	U.S. Forest Service
West Elk Contiguous	196	121,680	U.S. Forest Service
Beaver Castle	198	50,660	U.S. Forest Service
Mineral Mountain	215	51,600	U.S. Forest Service
Middle Fork	217	8,800	U.S. Forest Service
Cannibal Plateau[1]	218	31,990	U.S. Forest Service
Elk Creek	223	3,000	U.S. Forest Service
Baldy Peak	228	10,080	U.S. Forest Service
Upper West Fork Dallas Creek	231	1,880	U.S. Forest Service
Roubideau	241	19,770	U.S. Forest Service
Tabequache	242	10,240	U.S. Forest Service
Deep Creek/Decker Creek	280	43,960	U.S. Forest Service
South San Juan	284	128,736	U.S. Forest Service
Piedra	292	39,650	U.S. Forest Service
Runlett Park	293	1,200	U.S. Forest Service
Florida River	294	15,200	U.S. Forest Service
Whitehead Peak	297	460	U.S. Forest Service
Cunningham Creek	298	440	U.S. Forest Service
Rio Grand Reservoir	300	2,770	U.S. Forest Service
East Animas	302	4,380	U.S. Forest Service
West Needle	303	15,650	U.S. Forest Service
Hermosa	306	77,167	U.S. Forest Service
Sneva Mountain	359	600	U.S. Forest Service
Big Blue[2]		37,095	U.S. Forest Service
Courthouse[2]		10,285	U.S. Forest Service
Mt. Sneffels[2]		13,780	U.S. Forest Service
Dolores Peak[2]		12,385	U.S. Forest Service
Mt. Wilson[2]		6,585	U.S. Forest Service

* As of March 1980, legislation introduced by Colorado legislators and Senators does not endorse the entire administrative proposal.

1/ Area of further study

2/ These areas do not have numbers because they were endorsed by the Forest Service previous to the Rare II Study.

View of the La Garita Wilderness across West Fork Powderhorn Creek from Big Meadow (T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 11).

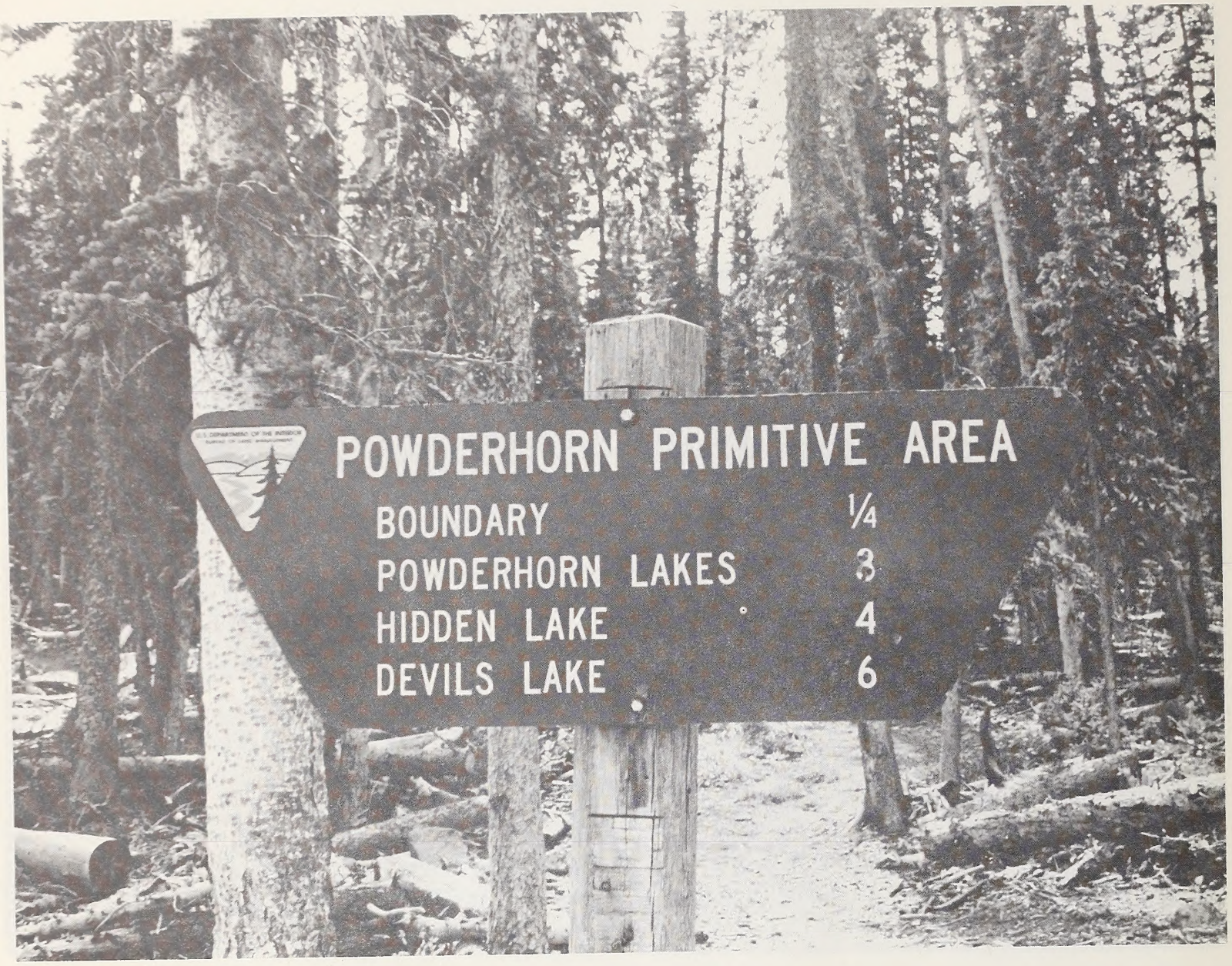
View looking south of Upper Powderhorn Lake
and the Calf Creek Plateau (T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 22).

Upper Powderhorn Lake looking north
at the head of the cirque basin
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 27).

View of Lower Powderhorn Lake and the La Garita Wilderness
(T. 45 N., R. 3 W., Section 22)

Lower Powderhorn Lake looking northeast
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 23).

Fishing below the Powderhorn Lakes is considered as one of the values enhancing outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation (T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 23).



Sign at the Indian Creek Trailhead
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 1).

Parking lot for the Indian Creek Trailhead
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 1).

View southwest from the head of Big Meadow, toward
the ridge leading to the Calf Creek Plateau
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 11).

View of nearby Uncompahgre Peak (Uncompahgre National Forest)
from the ridge leading up to the Calf Creek Plateau
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 15).

View from the Calf Creek Plateau looking south
over Devil's Lake and the contiguous
U.S. Forest Service RARE II Area,
Cannibal Plateau
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 34).

View from the Calf Creek Plateau looking east
towards the La Garita Wilderness Area
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 27).

Phelp's Cabin, located in Phelp's Cabin Park, may be considered part of the historical value of the Powderhorn (T. 45N., R. 2W., Section 20).

View of the Skull Park area heavily vegetated in willows
(T. 45N., R. 2W., Section 31).

Cattle grazing under a Bureau of Land Management permit
in the Powderhorn Swamp
(T. 45N., R. 2W., Section 17).

View of small glacial ponds in the Ptarmigan Badlands
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 26).

View above timberline of the Ptarmigan Badlands
to the east of the Powderhorn Lakes
(T. 45N., R. 3W., Section 26).

Wilderness Inventory:

The Powderhorn was incorporated into the Colorado State-wide public participation process for the Wilderness Review. From March through July of 1979, the Bureau conducted a public review, which included meetings and open houses throughout the state. During this time, eight letters were received addressing the Powderhorn Instant Study Area. Four of these supported BLM's recommendation that the area qualifies as a Wilderness Study Area, noting that it met the requirements set out in the Wilderness Act of 1964. Two letters addressed the mineral potential in the unit, citing possible reserves of titanium and columbium. One of these letters also noted that the area contained "extensive private land inholdings" as well as roads and stock ponds. The roads mentioned have been field checked and have been determined to be "ways", since no maintenance to insure regular and continuous use has taken place. The three reservoirs located within the unit do not have a significant impact on the naturalness of the unit. A letter from the State of Colorado pointed out that the State owns subsurface minerals within four sections of the area and suggests that since access to these sections cannot be denied the State, land exchanges between BLM and the State of Colorado should be made if Congress designates the area as Wilderness. Another letter noted that the area may have geothermal potential.

After the final initial inventory decision was made in August, 1979, several protest letters were received concerning all inventory units in the Lake City area, of which the Powderhorn is one. Four letters were received supporting wilderness in general for areas around Lake City, while three letters did not support the wilderness concept in the Lake City area. Those not wanting wilderness noted conflicts with other resources and land uses, which is not a factor BLM takes into consideration during the inventory stage of the wilderness review. No wilderness inventory information specific to the Powderhorn was noted.

The intensive wilderness inventory public comment period started February 1 and runs through April 30, 1980. An analysis of these will be completed in August, 1980, and will be attached to the Final Environmental Statement on the Powderhorn.

Gunnison Basin Management Framework Plan (1979):

Public involvement activities in association with the Gunnison Basin Unit Resource Analysis and Management Framework Plan were held in Lake City, Gunnison, Silverton, Montrose and Denver in August and September in 1978 and May and June, 1979. The Powderhorn wilderness proposal was not a major issue of public concern during the Management Framework Planning effort. Major concerns expressed at the formal meetings and through written comments related to other areas in the Gunnison Basin and to other resource values. Comments specific to the Powderhorn wilderness proposal were general in nature and were not clearly "for" or "against" designation of the area as a Wilderness Area.

Gunnison Basin Management Framework Plan (1972):

Public involvement meetings were held in association with the management framework plan in 1972. These six meetings were held: four in Gunnison, one in Montrose and one in Denver. Public comments received were overwhelmingly in support of primitive area designation of the Powderhorn.

Wilderness Act Hearing:

Public hearings, as required in Section 3(d) of the Wilderness Act of 1964, are tentatively scheduled for June 1980 and will be combined with the public hearings required for the Powderhorn Wilderness Area Environmental Statement. Notice of these hearings will be announced through the Federal Register and transcripts will accompany the transmittal of the Powderhorn Wilderness Suitability Report to Congress.

WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Powderhorn, upon designation as wilderness, will be managed under the same general objectives as those established for management of the area as a primitive area and as defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964.

As stated in the BLM Manual 6221.06, there are four primary objectives in primitive/wilderness area management;

1. Allow an unrestrained natural ecological succession.

2. Preserve public values that would be lost if the lands were developed for other purposes.

3. Preserve the ecological communities which possess outstanding qualities of solitude, physical challenge, inspiration, and primitive recreation values.

4. Preserve natural ecosytems as a standard against which the effects of civilization can be measured.

After designation of the Powderhorn as wilderness, a wilderness management plan will be developed. In preparation for this management plan, additional resource data will be collected regarding recreational use distribution, present patterns and future needs. The overriding goal of wilderness management shall always be the protection and perpetuation of the wilderness resource.

Congress should be alerted to the strategic importance of the 280-acre private inholding as it contributes to the total wilderness environment of the Powderhorn area. The Bureau of Land Management made efforts to acquire this parcel by negotiated purchase in the 1979 fiscal year. These negotiations were unsuccessful since the Bureau of Land Management appraised value was considerably lower than the price requested by the landowner. Efforts to negotiate purchased land acquisition or exchange with the private landowner will continue. The relationship of this inholding with the surrounding public land wilderness values may necessitate the need for land acquisition authority pursuant to the proposed Powderhorn wilderness legislation. Acquisition of this inholding without the consent of the landowner is unnecessary so long as the private property is devoted to uses compatible with the purposes of wilderness designation. 1/

The wilderness management plan will be treated as an ever-changing document to adjust, due to changing ecological or sociological conditions, to changing knowledge in the field of wilderness management, and due to Bureau policy.

1/ Language similar to that used for the "Kings Range National Conservation Area" Act of October 21, 1970 (84 Stat. 1067; 16 U.S.C. 460y, et.seq.) will be recommended for legislation that designates the Powderhorn into the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Wilderness areas in the Colorado Rockies are heavily recreation use-oriented in the summer months. Much of this is due to weather extremes, steep topography, high elevation, and, in the winter months, avalanche danger. The Powderhorn Instant Study Area, which contains several expanses of flat to moderate terrain, offers outstanding winter recreational opportunities in the form of ski touring, ski mountaineering, snowshoeing, and winter camping.

The Powderhorn Instant Study Area can also be considered to be an integral part of a wilderness "cluster" in Southwestern Colorado. By being managed under the National Wilderness Preservation System, the Powderhorn area would serve as a link in a circle of wilderness which would include Dolores Peak, Mt. Wilson, Mt. Sneffels and Uncompahgre proposed wilderness areas, and the existing La Garita and Weminuche Wilderness Areas.

Manageability of the Powderhorn Instant Wilderness Study Area is enhanced by the contiguous U.S. Forest Service RARE II Area, Cannibal Plateau. This RARE II area contains 31,990 acres. The combination of the two areas would create a relatively large, unconfined area, allowing diverse primitive recreational uses, and enhancement of outstanding opportunities for solitude. Present and future use pressures are not anticipated to be heavy, as compared with the Rawah Wilderness near Rocky Mountain National Park, or the Maroon Bells/Snowmass Wilderness near Aspen, Colorado. The Powderhorn Instant Study Area has limited access due to surrounding non-public lands, and its location is not near any large population centers or epicenters of recreational activity. The manageability is further enhanced by the alpine and subalpine ecosystems which are included within the proposed boundaries. This would aid in protection of habitat for wildlife and other wilderness resource values.

In accordance with Section 603(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, once an area has been designated for preservation as Wilderness by Congress, "the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964 which apply to National Forest wilderness areas, shall apply with respect to the administration and use of such designated area, including mineral surveys required by Section 4(d)(2) of the Wilderness Act, and mineral development, access, exchange of lands, and ingress and egress for mining claimants and occupants."

APPENDIX A

WILDERNESS INTENSIVE INVENTORY
Unit No. CO-030-089
Powderhorn ISA

1. SIZE

Acreage Breakdown:

BLM:	50,140 acres
Private:	920 acres

Private and State land inholdings are not calculated in the acreage being evaluated in this inventory, nor are they inventoried for wilderness characteristics.

The unit consists of 50,140 acres of public land of which 40,400 acres consist of the Powderhorn Primitive Area (Instant Study Area).

A. Location

This unit is located in Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties approximately 7 miles northeast of Lake City. It is contiguous with the 31,990-acre U.S. Forest Service RARE II Area No. 218 which has been recommended for further study as wilderness by the Forest Service.

B. Initial Inventory Unit Boundaries

Because this unit is contained within a Special Project Area (Gunnison Basin Range Environmental Statement), an Intensive Wilderness Inventory was conducted rather than an Initial Wilderness Inventory. The unit's boundaries are delineated in the following section.

C. Intensive Inventory Unit Boundaries

The intensive inventory unit boundaries have not been altered during the intensive inventory. The southern boundary is adjacent to the Gunnison National Forest RARE II Area No. 218 (Cannibal Plateau, 31,990 acres) proposed by the Forest Service for further study as wilderness. The eastern boundary consists of the boundary between non-public and public lands or those areas deemed not be contain wilderness characteristics or the edge of the disturbed area along Ten Mile Springs Road. The northern boundary primarily excludes those lands found not to contain wilderness characteristics. The western boundary consists of the boundary between non-public and public lands or those lands found not to contain wilderness characteristics.

D. Ownership

There are three areas within CO-030-089 where private inholdings are found. In the northwestern portion of the unit, 600 acres of non-public lands are found in a random location. Within one mile of the Powderhorn Lakes is a 280-acre private inholding. South of Buck Creek and north of Fourth of July Creek is a 40-acre parcel of private land. All other lands are public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

a. Leases: The area is leased to cattle and sheep grazing.

b. Mining Claims: There are no known valid mining claims in the unit.

Unit CO-030-089 includes all of the following sections in (see map):

T. 46N., R. 2W., Sections 20, 29 and 32;
T. 45N., R. 2W., Sections 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35;
T. 45N., R. 3W., Sections 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 36;
T. 44N., R. 2W., Sections 2, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 16.

The unit includes a portion of:

T. 46N., R. 2W., Sections 17, 19, 21, 28, 30, 31 and 33;
T. 46N., R. 3W., Sections 25, 31, 32 and 33;
T. 45N., R. 2W., Sections 4, 6, 11, 14, 21, 23 and 25;
T. 45N., R. 3W., Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 21 and 22;
T. 46N., R. 4W., Section 36;
T. 45N., R. 4W., Section 1;
T. 44N., R. 2W., Sections 1, 11, 12, 14 and 15.

E. Summary of Size Criteria

The unit consists of 50,140 acres of public land adjacent to RARE II Area No. 218 proposed by the Forest Service for further wilderness study. A total of 920 acres of private lands are found within this unit. Of the 50,140 acres of public lands, 40,480 acres make up the present Powderhorn Primitive Area.

Does the area have at least 5,000 acres of contiguous land or is it of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition?

(YES) NO (circle One)

SIGNATURE: J. Wesley Lering DATE: 12/3/79

2. NATURALNESS

A. Topography and Vegetation

The Powderhorn is characterized by relatively level alpine plateaus deeply dissected by glacial valleys and cirque basins. The elevation ranges from 12,644 feet on Calf Creek Plateau at the southern end to approximately 8,600 feet along Powderhorn Creek at the northern end. Vegetation generally follows the elevation with alpine tundra, spruce/fir forests, ponderosa pine and wide-open parks, and sagebrush/grassland being present. The area also contains several small ponds or lakes in the western half of the unit and includes meadow-type vegetation around these water bodies.

B. Imprints of Man

The imprints of man within the unit are generally widely scattered and have a limited impact due to topographic and vegetative screening. In addition, the relatively large size of the unit tends to absorb man's activities. Within the unit are four deteriorating log cabins of some historic value, approximately 12 miles of vehicle ways which are naturally revegetating, and range projects such as fences and stock ponds. Several miles of hiking and horseback riding trails exist but are completely compatible with the wilderness concept. The imprints of man within the unit were determined to be substantially unnoticeable with the area primarily affected by the forces of nature.

C. Summary of Naturalness Criteria

Unit CO-030-089, which focuses on the area's relatively unique alpine and subalpine environment, retains its primeval character and influence. The area contains lakes, large meadows, a heavy spruce/fir forest and extensive examples of alpine glaciation. There are no significant imprints of man within the unit.

Does the area or island generally appear to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable?

(YES) NO (circle one)

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: 12/3/79

3. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION ANALYSIS

A. SOLITUDE

Topography, vegetation and size all contribute to the unit's outstanding opportunities for solitude.

The relatively large size of the unit (50,140 acres) with its rugged and diverse terrain characterized by steep-sided drainages radiating outward from Calf Creek Plateau, provide numerous locations where opportunities for solitude are present. The dense stands of spruce, fir and aspen found along these drainages and on the ridges further enhance solitude opportunities through feelings of seclusion and intimacy. The higher elevations, within the alpine tundra environment of the Calf Creek Plateau, offer sweeping vistas of the surrounding mountains and adjacent proposed or designated wilderness, projecting a feeling of vastness which enhances solitude. Due to these combined factors, the area contains outstanding opportunities for solitude.

Summary of Solitude Criteria

Does the area have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

(YES) NO (circle one)

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: 12/3/79

3. B. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITY FOR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED RECREATION

The block-like configuration and relatively large size of the unit allow for unconfined freedom of movement of recreationists, particularly over the alpine tundra portions of the area. These areas provide outstanding opportunities for hiking or horseback riding during the summer and Fall and cross-country skiing or snowshoeing during the winter and Spring periods. Lakes in the area, and the forks of Powderhorn Creek, provide fishing opportunities as well as scenic locations for camping. The varied wildlife of the area, including beaver, ptarmigan, bobcat, mountain lion and a sizable elk herd, provide ample viewing and hunting possibilities. These factors all contribute to provide outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Summary of Primitive and Unconfined Recreation Criteria

Does the area have outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation?

(YES) NO (circle one)

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: 12/3/79

4. SUPPLEMENTAL VALUES

Ecological

The upper portion of the Calf Creek Plateau and Cannibal Plateau are reported to be one of the largest expanses of relatively flat areas of alpine vegetation in the contiguous United States.

Geological

The area, which consists of San Juan volcanic rock type, has numerous examples of glacial geomorphology including moraines, rock glaciers, tarns and U-shaped valleys.

Historical

The area contains some old cabin remnants and may be the general location of Alferd Packer's cannibalistic "feast" of five men in the winter of 1874.

Scenic

The area includes a relatively large and unique 360-degree visibility of surrounding wildlands: Weminuche Wilderness, La Garita Wilderness, Cannibal Plateau, Red Cloud Peak area, Uncompahgre proposed wilderness, West Elk Wilderness, Maroon Bells/Snowmass Wilderness, and the Grand Mesa.

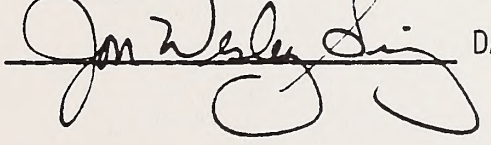
Educational/Scientific

The unit is high in educational and scientific values due to the wide variety of vegetative types and diverse wildlife.

Summary of Supplemental Values Criteria

Does the area contain ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historic value?

(YES) NO (circle one)

SIGNATURE:  DATE: 12/3/79

5. POSSIBILITY OF CERTAIN AREAS RETURNING TO A NATURAL CONDITION

No portions of the unit require active rehabilitation.

Summary

If the area or island were to become a wilderness area, could the imprint of man's work be reduced by either natural processes or by hand labor to a level judged to be substantially unnoticeable?

YES NO ~~(circle one)~~ N/A

SIGNATURE: Jon Wesley Lee DATE: 12/3/79

6. RATIONALE FOR/FOR NOT RECOMMENDING AS A W.S.A.:

Unit CO-030-089 meets all the criteria required of a Wilderness Study Area. The unit is primarily natural in character and its large size (50,140 acres) and block-like configuration allow for its management in an unimpaired condition. Its rugged topography and diverse vegetation provide outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. In addition, the unique alpine tundra areas and the high scenic quality of the area add supplemental values.

WILDERNESS INVENTORY
WILDERNESS SUMMARY SHEET

I. LOCATION

Inventory unit No. (area or island, grouping of areas or islands): CO-030-089

Areas/Island name: POWDERHORN ISA

District: Montrose State: CO

II. SUMMARY:

A. Results of wilderness characteristics analysis.

1. Does the area or island appear to be natural? ✓ yes ___ no
2. Does the area or island offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type recreation? ✓ yes ___ no
3. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ✓ yes ___ no
4. Does the area or island have supplemental values? ✓ yes ___ no

B. Resulting map.
Attach a map showing inventory unit, roads, area with possibility of returning to a natural state, recommended boundary of wilderness study area (WSA).

III. RECOMMENDATION

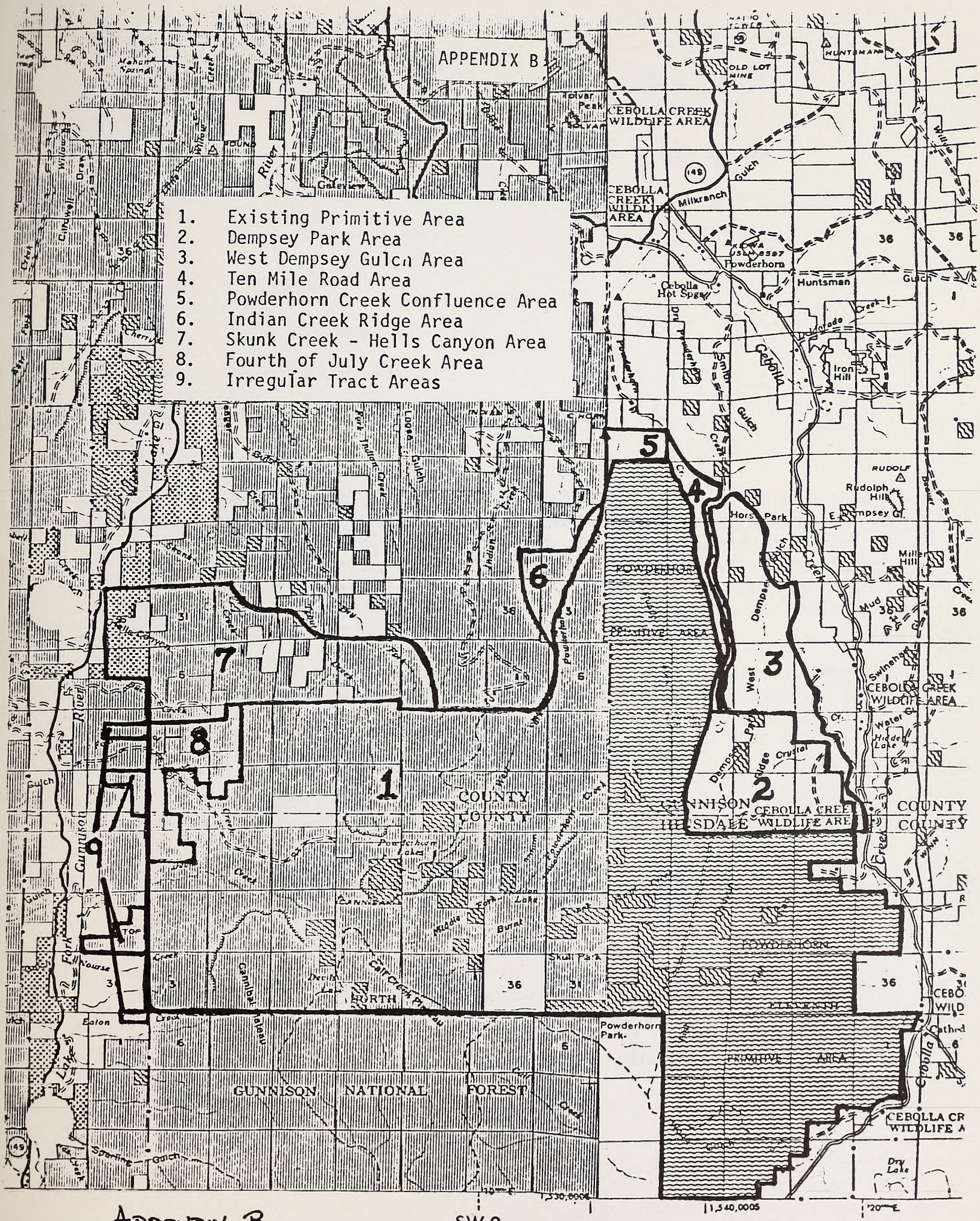
Check one:
✓ Area or island should be approved as a WSA.
___ Area or island does not qualify for wilderness study.
___ A portion of the area(s) or island(s) should be approved as a WSA for further study and reported to the President. The restrictions imposed by Section 603 will no longer apply (reference to map) on the remainder of the area.

IV. APPROVAL

A. Area Manager: Date: 12/3/79

B. District Manager: Date: 12/6/79

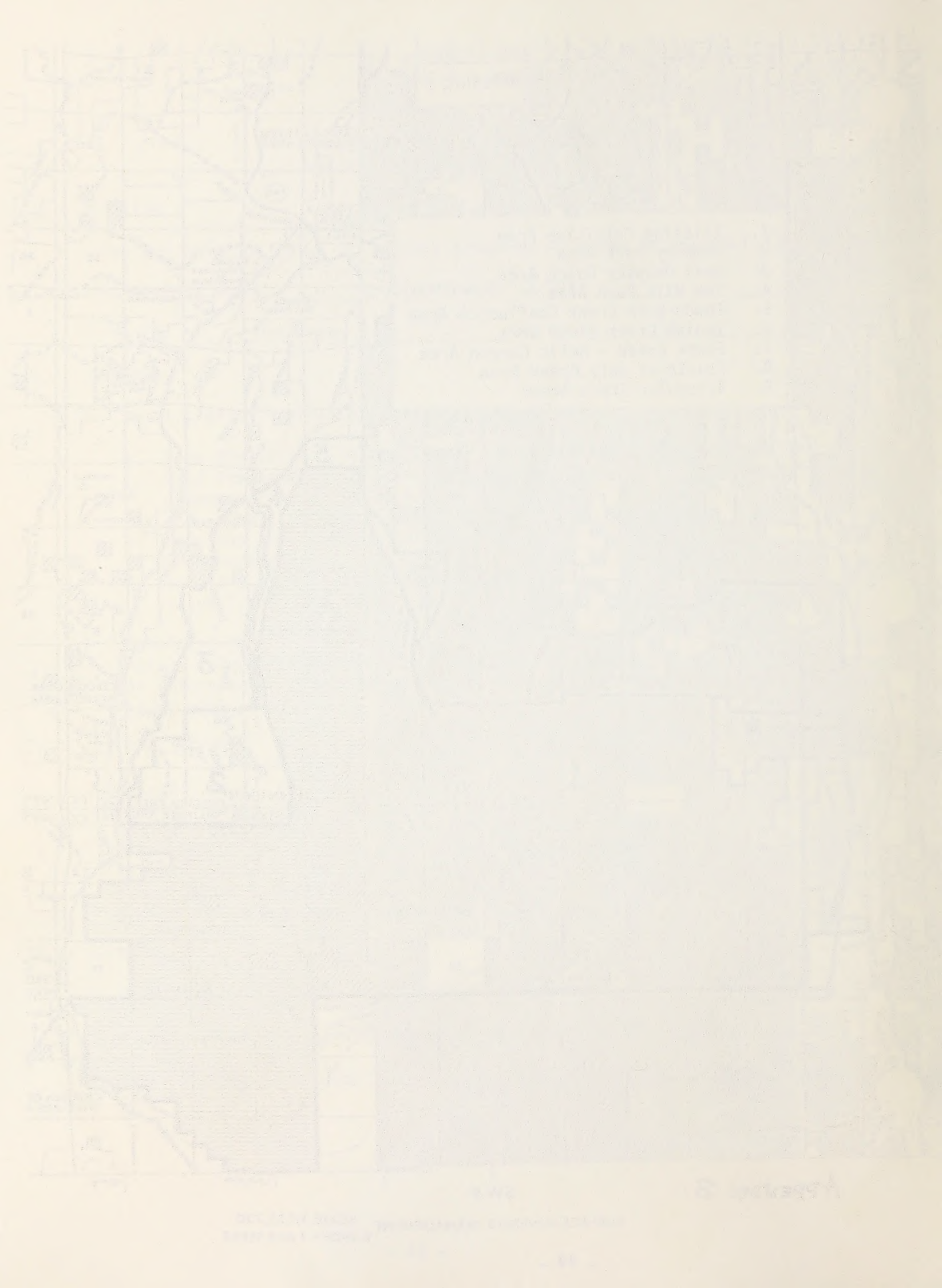
C. State Director: Date: 12/12/79



APPENDIX B

SW-9

SURFACE-MINERALS MANAGEMENT SCALE 1:126,720
½ INCH = 1 MILE SERIES



APPENDIX C

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF MINES
2401 E STREET, NW.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20241

80 JAN 14 A10:00

IN REPLY REFER TO:
EBM-MIA-MLA

January 10, 1980

Mr. Dale R. Andrus
State Director
Bureau of Land Management
Room 700
Colorado State Bank Building
1600 Broadway
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Mr. Andrus:

It has come to our attention through the Director, Bureau of Land Management, (memorandum attached) that you have requested advance mineral assessment information from work done by the Bureau of Mines in the Powderhorn Primitive Area. We are pleased to furnish you the results of our work to date and assure you the Bureau of Mines will remain responsive to BLM's needs by making mineral-related information from wilderness studies available as early as possible.

The Bureau of Mines and Geological Survey perform these mineral studies cooperatively, and conclusions cannot be drawn until both agencies have completed their work. Although interpretive findings will not be available for some time, the following may be useful in your work on environmental statements.

In the Powderhorn Primitive Area, analytical results indicate the presence of minor amounts of thorium and titanium disseminated in granite between Smith Gulch and Cebolla Creek. Numerous trenches were sampled within this area, all apparently dug in search of thorium and titanium. Chip and channel samples contained from a trace to 0.13 percent thorium, and from 0.2 to 0.3 percent titanium. The thorium content averaged .01 percent. Manganese occurs in narrow veins and veinlets in the Fish Canyon tuff near Cap Mountain. Samples from manganese prospects contained up to 45 percent manganese in veins and veinlets ranging from less than 1 inch to several inches in width. All samples came from either limited exposures of mineralized granite or from the most favorable appearing zones in a volcanic cover of unknown thickness that blankets most of the area. The thorium, titanium, and manganese occurrences described above were not of economic significance in 1979.

We hope that this information reaches you in time for inclusion in the draft EIS.

Sincerely yours,

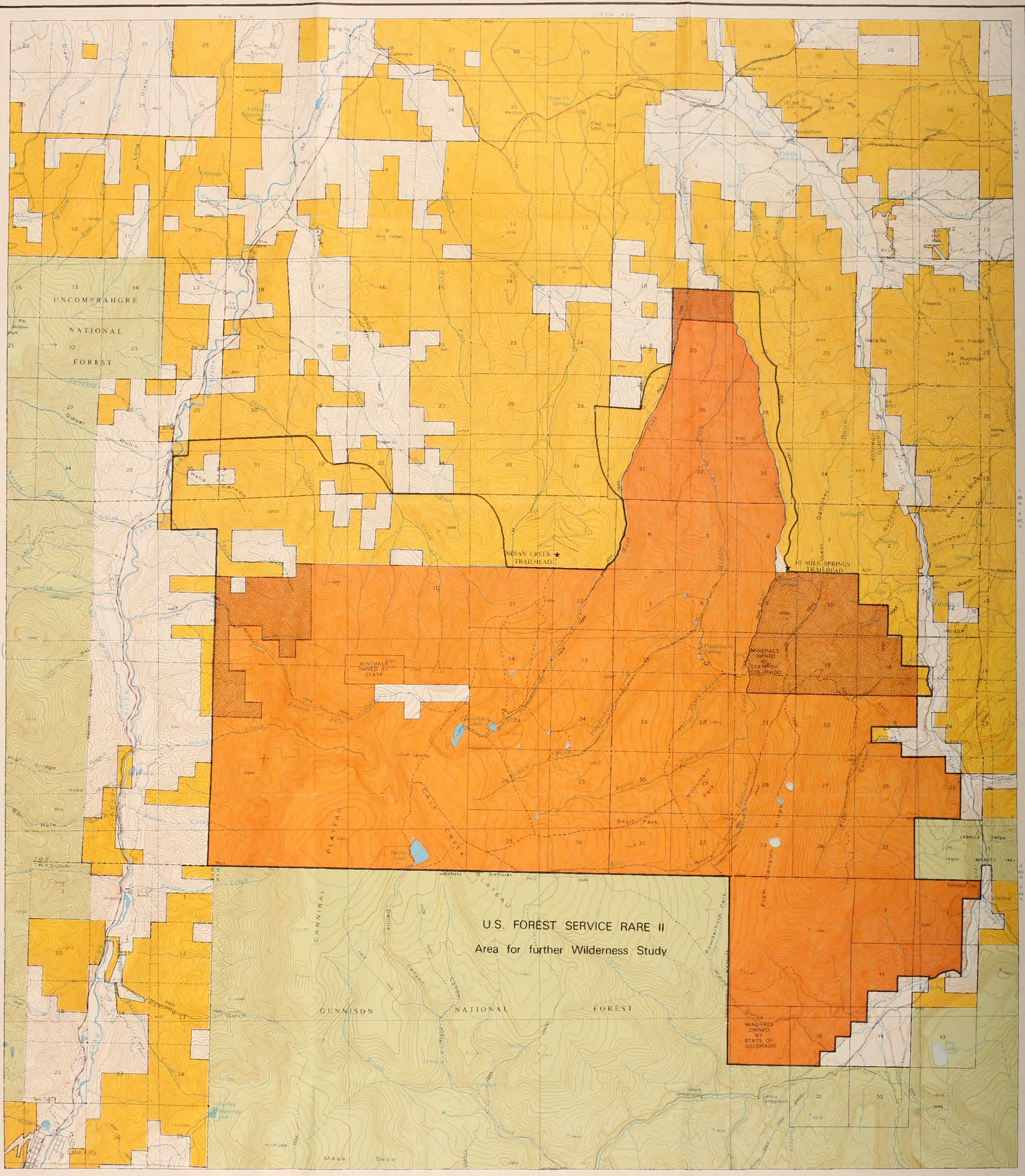
James Paone

James Paone
Director
Division of Mineral Land Assessment

Enclosure

GPO 855-209

POWDERHORN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1980 — 675-148

COLORADO

LOCATION DIAGRAM

13°
TRUE NORTH
MAGNETIC NORTH
APPROXIMATE MEAN DECLINATION, 1978

SCALE 1:50,000

MILES
FEET
KILOMETERS

CONTOUR INTERVAL 80 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

LEGEND

- TRAIL
- TRAILHEAD ★
- PUBLIC LAND
- NATIONAL FOREST
- POWDERHORN PRIMITIVE AREA
- AREAS INCLUDED WITH PRIMITIVE AREA IN MFP II RECOMMENDATION
- BOUNDARY FOR ALL LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS
- WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

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